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September 14, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: FE - Mr. Hilsman

FROM: INR - Thomas L. Hughes

SUBJECT: Our Views on the Make-up of a New Government in Vietnam

We have prepared, as shown in the attachment, a selected list of personalities whom we feel could provide Vietnam with competent and efficient leadership under a new government. Our selection of a new cabinet, prepared in conjunction with reviewing the draft submitted to us by Mr. Mendenhall, has taken into account the compatibility as well as the capability of these officials, their religious affiliation, and their geographic distribution, i.e., south or Cochinchina, central or Annam, and north or Tonkin. We also believe that the best leadership lies largely within the bureaucracy and within elements that have served in government but have recently been disaffected or removed. Therefore, potential candidates from among the so-called "oppositionists" have been screened carefully and kept to a minimum.

In the way of general comments, we believe that Vietnam is not faced with any serious shortage of effective, non-Communist leadership. There are undoubtedly many personalities not reflected in our list who would perform effectively and, in this respect, it cannot be overlooked that many of them might well come from the relatively unknown middle ranks of the present bureaucracy. For these reasons, therefore, we believe it preferable to think in terms of a predominately civilian government, even though the military may continue to play a major power role for some time. We should not necessarily conclude that the army, which is largely a professional one, will insist on cabinet positions so long as the important cabinet posts are filled by persons trusted by the generals. We believe that most of the military will support the great majority of the candidates advanced above, including Vice President Tho.

We also have some specific recommendations which are implicit in our list. We believe that the creation of a cabinet department for religious affairs will in time create a confrontation

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between the various religious groups or will at least lead some to seek official recognition or support of their own interests. We believe that the modification of certain laws and their judicious implemention will serve the purpose of alleviating or impeding tensions between religious groups and the government.

However, a national advisory council, representing the various religious groups in Vietnam, would serve a useful purpose in maintaining the present state of friendly relations existing between the religious groups as well as advising and assisting the government on matters affecting the condition of religious freedom.

Finally, we believe that, in order to lessen the possibility of a power struggle within the military leadership, the position of Chief of the Joint General Staff should be rotated, say in the fashion of our own military establishment.

Attachment:

As stated

cc: FE - Mr. Mendenhall
FE/WGVN - Mr. Kattenburg
FE/SEA - Mr. Koren